Human Rights Consortium Scotland

Annual Report 2026



Human Rights Consortium Scotland
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Introduction

The Human Rights Consortium is Scotland's civil society network devoted to defending and promoting human rights. It has been a particularly busy year as we have sought to fulfil our objectives of strengthening the collective voice of Scottish civil society through lobbying and advocacy and ensuring that we provide our members with the information and skills they need to defend and promote human rights.

In Charlie McMillan's first full year as Director and mine as Chair, we were very pleased to welcome new members of the team: Tom to assist with fundraising and business development and Justyna as administrator, not forgetting Ruari who continues to make a huge contribution to organisation of events and publications.

Our conference in February 2026 was an outstanding success with some 155 delegates and thoughtful and stimulating contributions from key note speakers and workshop leaders. March saw the first AGM to be held under our new constitution in which members play a role in electing the Board of Trustees. We are extremely grateful for all the time and effort and expertise that Trustees contribute to making the Consortium a vibrant organisation.

Our membership continues to grow and this reflects very positively on the quantity and quality of the newsletters and webinars that the team create and distribute. The latest production 'Rights Here, Rights Now', a campaign of storytelling and histories, is a co-operation between the Consortium and JustRight Scotland and it will be formally launched in the Scottish Parliament in October.

We look forward to the year ahead in which we will be continuing to lobby and advocate for the promised Scottish Human Rights Act; enshrining the rights that have the capacity to improve the lives of everyone in Scotland. The law will be the first step. The challenge will be in implementation and holding duty bearers to account. We encourage all members to work with us to that end.



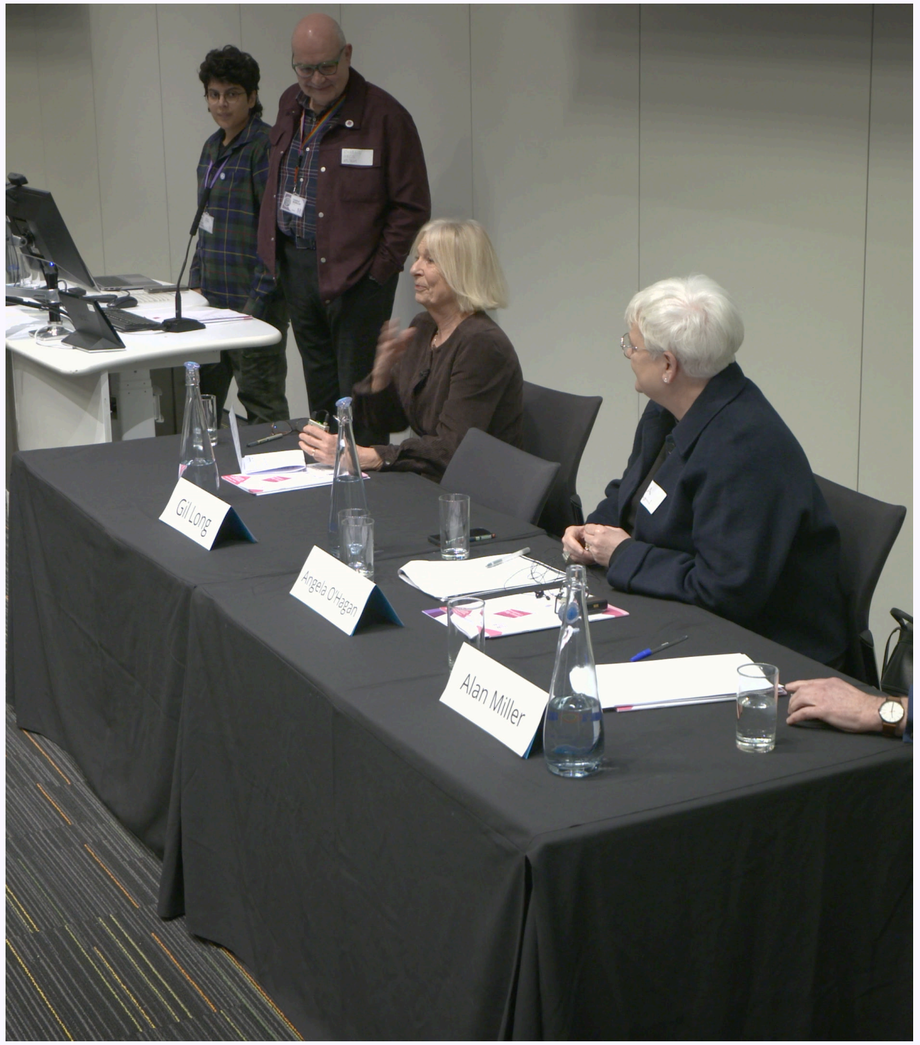
Gil Long (Chair)

Theory of Change & Strategy

During 2025/26, HRCS completed a significant period of organisational development. Following the adoption of a new Constitution and transition to SCIO status, membership was refreshed and expanded to 170 organisational members and 350 individual members, strengthening accountability to the network.

The Board and Director also developed a new Theory of Change and five-year Strategy, setting out a vision of a strong, collective civil society voice that is empowered to defend and promote human rights in Scotland. The strategy focuses on two key priorities: advancing human rights through policy and influencing work, and strengthening the HRCS network through membership growth, capacity building and collective action.

Over the next five years, HRCS will continue to promote human rights incorporation, amplify the voices of members and human rights defenders, and support civil society to use human rights as a tool for democracy, accountability and social justice. To deliver this work, the organisation will continue to strengthen its financial sustainability and operate in line with human rights principles, including participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality.





Policy & Influencing

HRCS has continued to provide leadership on advancing human rights through changes to law, policy and practice at both Scottish and UK levels. Working with partners including Together, HRC Northern Ireland and HRC Cymru, we have campaigned for stronger human rights protections, promoted implementation of international human rights standards and strengthened collaboration across the UK's devolved nations. In November 2025, the three Human Rights Consortiums jointly hosted a webinar marking the 75th anniversary of the ECHR, attended by 49 participants.

Throughout the year, HRCS maintained an active role in UK human rights networks and launched The Strasbourg Bulletin, a new series exploring the work of the Council of Europe and its impact on human rights protection. We also engaged extensively with the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government, including providing evidence to the Equality, Human Rights and Civic Justice Committee and contributing to action on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' recommendations.

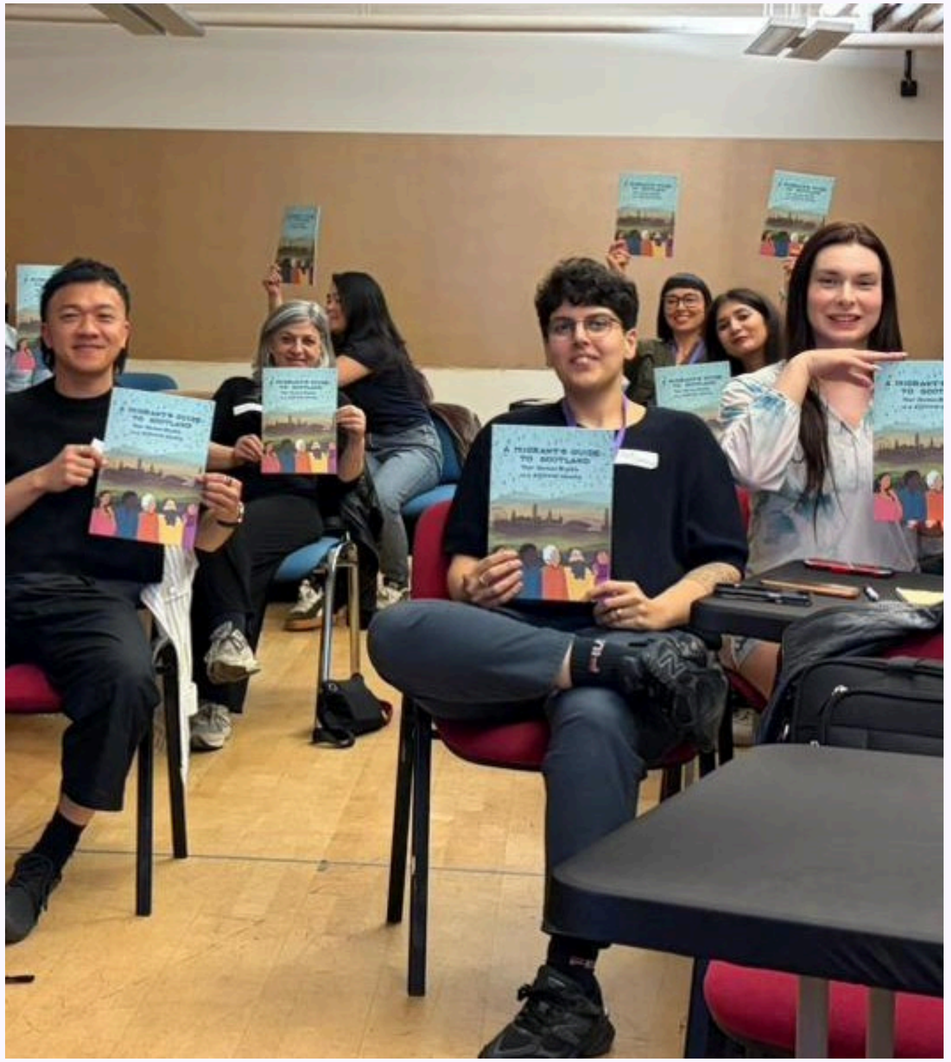
HRCS continued to play a leading role in efforts to secure a Scottish Human Rights Bill. We published a Manifesto for Action ahead of the 2026 Scottish Election, co-chaired Scotland's Civil Society Incorporation Working Group, and supported the development of a shared civil society manifesto on human rights incorporation. We also published Current Priorities for Human Rights Incorporation in Scotland, which has informed ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government on incorporation and accountability.

Alongside this work, HRCS remained actively engaged in strategic government groups, parliamentary processes and international forums, helping to ensure that human rights remain a priority in Scotland's policy and legislative landscape.

Migrants' Participation Project

Through its Migrants' Project, HRCS has strengthened migrant participation in human rights work by creating opportunities for migrants to share their experiences, influence policy and build connections across the human rights and migration sectors. Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation between 2023 and 2026, the project increasingly focused on empowerment, activism and leadership during 2025/26.

Key activities included work on the Home Office's eVisa scheme, awareness-raising workshops with migrant communities, and collaboration with CEMVO and Amnesty International on campaigns relating to the Prevent Strategy. In June 2025, the project facilitated discussion on the UN ICESCR Concluding Observations, leading to the publication of Migrant Rights: Barriers to Realising Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for Migrants in Scotland, which highlighted systemic barriers facing migrants and proposed practical solutions. The project also supported the development of *A Migrant's Guide to Scotland – Your Human Rights in a Different Country*, launched in March 2026 following engagement with migrant communities and warmly received by stakeholders and participants.



Membership & Network Development

- 170+ organisational members
- 350+ individual members

HRCS continued to strengthen civil society capacity and collective action on human rights throughout the year. We hosted 25 events for members and partners, attracting over 800 attendances, and brought together 155 participants at our annual conference. We also supported policy development and advocacy through publication of our 2026 Scottish Election manifesto, *Our Rights. Your Move.*, and our report *Current Priorities for Human Rights Incorporation in Scotland*.

Alongside this, we maintained leadership roles within Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP 2), contributed to policy discussions on issues including immigration and human rights incorporation, and continued to support member-led campaigning and engagement.

Our reach and engagement continued to grow, with 20,000 new website users, 950 newsletter subscribers, 3,000 LinkedIn followers and 700 Bluesky followers by March 2026.



Staffing, Governance & Funding

2025/26 was a year of consolidation for HRCS. Following a competitive recruitment process, Charlie McMillan was appointed Director in May 2025, and the team expanded with the recruitment of a Membership and Events Assistant and a Business Development Lead. Leadership also evolved, with Gil Long succeeding Aidan Collins as Chair and Aysha Gilani joining the Board as Treasurer.

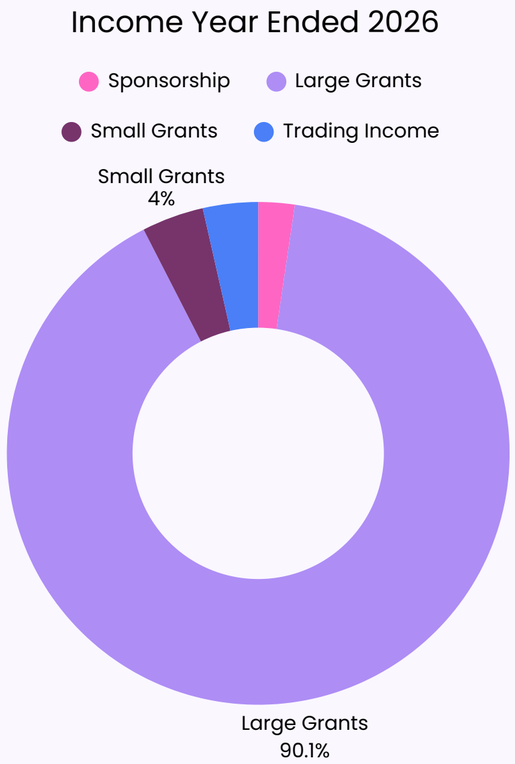
The organisation strengthened its governance arrangements during the year, appointing four new Trustees and establishing a Fundraising Sub-Committee. HRCS also secured a new three-year grant from the Legal Education Foundation, providing vital core funding to support its work.

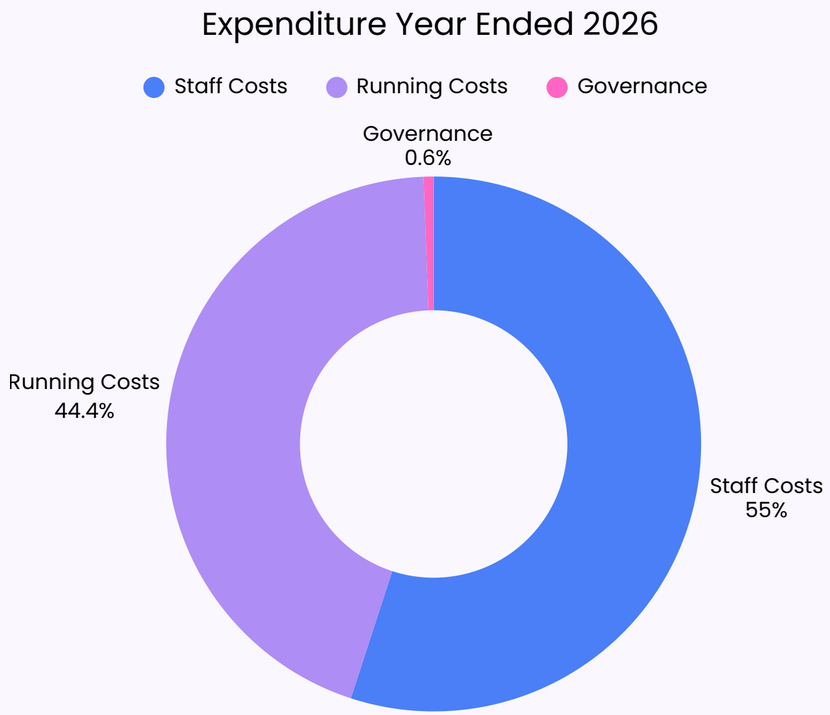
While the Paul Hamlyn Foundation-funded Migrants' Participation Project concluded in March 2026 following an unsuccessful continuation funding bid, HRCS remains committed to this area of work and is actively seeking replacement funding with partners. The organisation is also preparing to relocate its Edinburgh office following notice from its landlord.

HRCS is grateful to its funders, sponsors and supporters, whose contributions have enabled the organisation's continued impact and development. We also continue to strengthen our policies, processes and governance arrangements to ensure that we operate as a human rights-based organisation.



Income & Expenditure





Acknowledgements

HRCS would like to express its sincere gratitude to all of our funders, members, partners and supporters whose contributions make our work possible.

In particular, we wish to thank the Legal Education Foundation, Corra Foundation, AB Charitable Trust and Craignish Trust for their invaluable financial support. Their investment in HRCS has enabled us to strengthen Scotland's human rights sector, support civil society collaboration, and advance the protection and promotion of human rights across Scotland.

We are also grateful to our members, trustees, volunteers and wider network of partners for their continued commitment, expertise and solidarity. Together, we are building a stronger collective voice for human rights in Scotland.